

# TEMPO

AUTUMN

1956

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NUMBER

# 41

QUARTERLY

TWO SHILLINGS

*Igor Strawinsky*

# CANTICUM SACRUM

AD HONOREM SANCTI MARCI NOMINIS

*For Tenor and Baritone Soli, Mixed Chorus and Orchestra*

FIRST PERFORMANCE, VENICE, 13th SEPTEMBER, 1956

“ . . . The Music is surprisingly eclectic in stylistic features and technical procedures. Twelve-note technique predominates, but there are “pandiatonic” sections whose telescoped harmonies recall an earlier Strawinsky. This style is shown at its simplest in the interludes for the organ which divide the vocal passages in the first section. Strawinsky’s 12-note manner, which amalgamates this twentieth-century principle of composition with the canonic techniques of fourteenth-century *Ars Nova*, is displayed in the second section, where a tenor solo recalls, in its melodic style, the protagonist’s part in ‘*Oedipus Rex*’. No less impressive are the central choral sections whose melismas and other melodic features are obviously indebted to Gregorian chant. This inspirational source is most clearly revealed in the *Dedicatio* set for a vocal duet accompanied by two instrumental parts. . . .”—*The Times* (London)

“ . . . the core of the work lies in its counterpoint. The fact that the brief opening and closing choruses are solidly harmonic in nature in no way contradicts this. On the contrary, they stand like two massive pillars that enfold the work and throw the intensely contrapuntal quality of the inner movement into even sharper relief. In a sense this contrast is reflected in the text itself, for while the outer choruses are concerned with the duty to preach the Gospel, the kernel of the work—that is the contrapuntal movements—is concerned with the nature of that Gospel. . . .”—*The Observer* (London)

“ . . . As already in earlier works, Strawinsky selects from the wealth of possibility that instrumentation which seems to him serviceable to the case in point. Here he excludes a range of “singing” instruments, such as violins and cellos, clarinets and horns; there remain the oboes and cor anglais, bassoons and contra-bassoon, trumpets, trombones, violas, double-basses and organ, which yield a primary timbre of, so to speak, hieratic severity, which only once is relaxed and illuminated by flute and harp. . . .”—*Die Weltwoche* (Zürich)

“ . . . One of the most significant events in the religious music of this half-century. . . .”—*Wiener Kurier* (Vienna)

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